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NEWS RELEASE

Business calls for urgent changes to waste recovery

Changes to waste recovery, so co-mingling of recycled materials which results in as little as 30% of collected glass being recycled into new bottles and jars and threatens some export-related jobs in Auckland were called for today at a seminar hosted by the Glass Packaging Forum as part of the 22nd WasteMINZ Conference.

Key stakeholders from local and central government, the waste management industry and food and beverage brands visited Villa Maria Estate's winery in Auckland and heard an impassioned plea from those involved in the wine industry to use the new "Supercity" start in Auckland to safeguard our export wine industry.

John Webber General Manager of the Glass Packaging Forum says: "The move to co-mingled collections of glass, cans, paper and plastic in a single wheelie bin may have increased overall recovery rates but it has cut the quality of the recovered materials. Where glass is colour separated at kerbside, 98% can be remanufactured into glass containers at the OI glass furnace in Penrose, Auckland. However if glass is compacted with other materials in the collection vehicle - the amount of quality glass which can be used to make new glass has reduced to as little as 30% to 40%. Even with newer systems one in four glass bottles will be lost to the remanufacturing process."

"After several years of co-mingled collections in Auckland, there is not enough recycled glass available to OI even before the introduction of its new 3rd furnace, meaning that our world leading performance of over 60% recycled glass content in New Zealand-made glass containers, is under threat. And this is a real problem because reducing the amount of recycled glass in wine bottles is now having a direct impact on our ability to sell New Zealand bottled wine overseas. If we can't keep the carbon content of our New Zealand manufactured glass bottles competitive by efficient recycling here, then wine for the mass commercial market may be bulk exported and bottled closer to the end-market"

Business is also backed by a comprehensive Shape NZ poll of over 570 people living within Supercity boundaries conducted in conjunction with the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development in July.

The poll shows that 80% Aucklanders believe that their council should ensure that 100% of the glass they collect is suitable for melting into new bottles and a similar amount believe that glass should be recycled in New Zealand.

Fabian Yukich, Executive Director Villa Maria Estate NZ says:

“As part of our policy of continuous improvement in reducing environmental impact, Villa Maria performs independently audited carbon emission measurements. This is crucial to winning and keeping valuable export contracts for major supermarkets and other retailers. For a premium wine producer like Villa Maria, glass is the only option, but it is also a significant part of our carbon footprint making recycling recovery rates vital to our sustainable initiatives. The higher the amount of recycled glass in a glass bottle, the lower the bottle’s carbon footprint. If less recycled glass is available for OI, they have to use virgin materials which have a direct impact on the environment and on business. It's critical that the new Auckland Council takes this issue seriously and makes it a top priority.”

The Glass Packaging Forum supports changes to waste recovery by keeping glass collection separate at kerbside. If glass continues to be co-mingled, changes including lower compaction rates to stop glass breaking need to be made.

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For information

The Glass Packaging Forum operates one of the first voluntary product stewardship schemes which has been accredited by the Government as meeting the criteria set out in the Waste Minimisation Act (2008). The scheme currently covers over 80% of the glass on the market in New Zealand primarily for food and beverages and includes the major manufacturer of glass containers, brand owners and retailers.

Details of Shape NZ survey results available on request.

The results are included in the Business Council’s report called Creating a Sustainable Super city – how to accelerate Auckland?